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THE EXPERT SWIMMER.

As soon as the summer is nearly over, the fashionable world of Paris, like the fashionable world of New York, takes flight to the country and the watering-places, and "everybody" is then said to be "out of town." A great resort of the *beau monde* is St. Malo in Brittany, a picturesque sea-port, which Chateaubriand has immortalised. A few summers ago, the weather being remarkably fine, it was more thronged than usual. Any one who had been a frequenter of the *salons* in the Chaussée d'Antin during the preceding winter, would have met old familiar faces at every step he took. All Paris was at Malo. When we say *all Paris*, of course we include the *élégants* of Paris—those superb gentlemen, so well known on the Champ de Mars, and at the billiard-tables of the Jockey Club, who live so gaily for a short time, no one knows how, astonishing all Paris by the brilliancy of their boots, the whiteness of their linen, and the grandeur of their air, and disappearing by-and-by no one knows where.

At Malo, at the period we mention, there was one of these distinguished individuals, whom everybody knew, though everybody was surprised to see him there. The fact was, that it was universally believed that during the preceding summer he had made a very clean finish of a fine property at the Café de Paris, at the opera, and on the race-course at Chantilly, and was now in training for the Morgue in some very gloomy garret. What was the surprise of the visitors at St. Malo, when he made his appearance on the promenade as fresh, as gay, as gloriously foppish as ever; white gloves, exquisite boots, *lorgnette*, glossy moustache—nothing in his whole *personnel* betokened aught but prosperity and wealth! He played as deeply at the casino as ever he had done at the Jockey Club, and displayed the same flow of animal spirits, and the same disposition to make jokes and say smart things, that made him "such a nice young man and so witty" amongst the young ladies. Every one began to wonder how he had repaired his fortunes, and his sudden resurrection was added, without hesitation, to the already numerous wonders of the world.

The mystery was, however, very soon explained. Two personages of rough exterior made their appearance one morning at his hotel, and inquired for him. Upon receiving a description of them from the waiter, he arose and bolted straightway through the back door, and fetching a compass, came round in front, and flew, rather than ran, towards the beach. The two strangers—let us acknowledge it at once, the two bailiffs—gave chase with tremendous ardour. The whole of the fashionables were out taking their morning walk, and were hugely delighted at the spectacle. Here was a fair prospect for an exciting scene—a full-blown comedy. The first act was begun; the *dénouement* was coming. All rushed towards the hapless wight, expecting to see him surrender at discretion as soon as he reached the water. Not so; as he ran, he began to divest himself of his outer garments, and ere he arrived at low-water mark, his costume—*proh pudor!*—consisted of a pair of bathing drawers, "pure and simple," as his countrymen would say. Without longer delay than was necessary to slip off his boots, he plunged into the foaming tide, and struck out boldly towards the illimitable perspective. The "first circles," all of which were now assembled on the scene of action, were still more delighted. This was the first touch of the emotional that many of their members had met with for some time, notwithstanding a diligent look-out for months previously in various parts of Europe. None, however, were more delighted than the bailiffs. They found themselves suddenly elevated into "lions," the observed of all observers; and they felt sure of their prey, for of course he would have to come ashore very speedily. They thought they needed but to wait a few minutes, or but half an hour at most.

But they were too confident. Human affairs are necessarily uncertain. Two hours rolled over without the lively Parisian's giving the slightest evidence of any intention to return to his native shore. He was evidently in his glory though not in his element. The fondest wish of the Frenchman's heart was being gratified—the possession of a fine opportunity for showing

off his accomplishments to an admiring crowd. He was a capital swimmer, and being now put upon his mettle in more senses than one, he floated, he dived, he walked, he swam on his back, swam with one leg in the air, swam on one side, in short, did everything that man could do in the water, and still showed no signs of weariness. The bailiffs, instead of being discouraged by these evolutions, only became more anxious for his capture. This, however, seemed nearly as far away as ever. He was nearly three hours in the water, and was still gamboling like a porpoise or dolphin of lively disposition. Suddenly he turned his head from the shore, and swam rapidly towards the open sea. The public functionaries who were awaiting his return thought this a last attempt to deceive them, and were chuckling at the thought of how quickly he would be undeceived. But they began to be alarmed when they found that he was rapidly disappearing, and was already a mere speck on the blue expanse of waters; and at last they came to the conclusion that he was about to end his career and baffle his creditors by drowning himself, thus killing two birds with one stone. Suddenly he was seen to hail a fishing lugger, and a moment afterwards his white back glittered in the sunlight as he ascended its side. The boat then made sail towards the offing, and was soon lost sight of.

Nothing more was heard of the swimmer for three weeks. He was talked of, to be sure, but before that time had elapsed some more exciting topic had arisen, and he was forgotten. One day, however, the English steamer came alongside the quay at St. Malo, and a family, apparently of distinction, if a huge pile of luggage and a great retinue of servants prove it, disembarked, and what was the astonishment of the inhabitants to see the Parisian exquisite at the head of it, with a charming English girl leaning on his arm, her father and mother following in the rear, and he himself looking as smiling, as elegant, and gorgeously arrayed as ever.

All was soon explained. He had, by large promises, induced the fishermen to convey him to Jersey, and once there, his address did all the rest. His charming air, the air of romance and mystery he threw about his position, carried the shopkeepers by storm. They hastened to rig him out from top to toe in the extreme of the mode, in the full belief that they were gaining a place in the memory of a frolicsome count of high rank, and that his arrival in a strange country, in swimming drawers and a fisherman's jacket, was "a way he had." Once equipped, he sallied forth, and was soon the lion of St. Helier's. Everybody was on tiptoe to invite him to their house. He was flattered, fêted, and caressed. He made the acquaintance of a wealthy merchant then residing there with his family. He soon became a constant visitor at the house, and having, by his pleasing appearance and fascinating manners, secured the affections of one of the daughters, became possessor of her hand, and with it an enormous fortune. He returned to St. Malo in the manner we have described. Inquiries made about him by Mr. P. in Paris were satisfactorily answered by well-wishing friends and were amply sufficient to satisfy any slight doubts that he might have; for with all an Englishman's love for alliance with idle aristocracy, the father, as well as the daughter, was captivated by the Frenchman's brilliant exterior, easy manners, lofty pretensions, and evident familiarity with good society. The fortune restored the Parisian to his old position in society. He paid his debts at St. Malo, and the next day started for Paris, where he was formally united to Miss P. in the bonds of matrimony. The matter furnished a delightful topic for the gossip in the *salon* of the Chaussée d'Antin last winter. Much as people were disposed, however, to blame the gentleman for the conduct which had driven him to commit himself as a last resource to the mercy of the treacherous deep, all admired his singular audacity, his surprising address, and wondered at his good fortune. He and his wife are now moving in quite as good circles as those which assembled on the beach at St. Malo to see him take the plunge which was to bring him a happy deliverance or an ignoble end;—and the whole story is simple truth.